
Twin Cities Gateway Area Summer Visitor Profile

Final Report

September 2012

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Twin Cities Gateway

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College of Food, Agricultural & Natural Resource Sciences***

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge funding from the Twin Cities Gateway and the detailed project work of a Metro Tourism sub-committee including: Steve Markuson, Gayle Junnila, Jan Kroells, and Adam Johnson. Thank you to data collectors Cameron Swenson, Eliza Grimes, Emily Carr, Hannah Hutchins, Jesse Williams, John Briel, Lauren Allen, Mary Hammes, and Sam BeVier. Thank you to Ben Winchester, Sarah Thiede, and Samantha Bruno of the University of Minnesota Center for Small Towns for data entry. We appreciate Ryan Pesch of the University of Minnesota Extension Community Vitality for producing the visitor maps and Hung Tuan Tran for data checking. A special thanks to the many sites who opened up their organizations for our data collection efforts:

April Timp

AmericInn Hotel & Suites

Barb White

Hampton Inn & Suites

Cindy Bornetun

Anoka County Parks

Cory Hinz

Bunker Beach Water Park

Dan Jacott

Majestic Oaks Golf Club

Jay Bhatka

Country Inn & Suites

Jim McDonald

Super 8 Hotel

John Connelly

National Sports Center

Kory Lesnick

Hilton Garden Inn & Hampton Inn

Mary Tourville-Phillips

Best Western Plus

Peter Turok

Anoka Historic Downtown

Siah St. Clair

Springbrook Nature Center

Tim Anderson

Bunker Hills Golf Club

Todd Roy

Homewood Suites

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INTRODUCTION

In the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, comprehensive consumer information dates back to 2007 (Davidson-Peterson, 2008). And, while the Twin Cities Gateway is part of the metropolitan area, it has a distinct character and perhaps unique visitorship. As consumer profile information is a requirement for effective tourism marketing and planning, the Twin Cities Gateway Association funded a profile of summer visitors to the Twin Cities Gateway area Summer 2012. This project was run simultaneously with a Twin Cities Metropolitan area visitor summer. This report details the methods and findings of the Twin Cities Gateway Area visitor profile.

METHODOLOGY

On-site, in-person questionnaires were administered by trained staff to Twin Cities Gateway Area visitors the summer of 2012, specifically between June 22 and August 19, 2012.

Study Setting

The Twin Cities Gateway represents a group of nine communities located along the northern edge of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area had a 2011 population of 3.32 million residents, is the 16th largest metropolitan area in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2012).

The Twin Cities Gateway communities – Anoka, Blaine, Coon Rapids, Fridley, Ham Lake, Lino Lakes, Mounds View, New Brighton, and Shoreview – offer small town charm yet easy access to the additional cultural, shopping, and cosmopolitan attractions in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Visitors can experience world-class sports complexes and numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation, ranging from award-winning golf courses to family-friendly water parks to picturesque outdoor parks and learning centers.

Sampling

A convenience sample was designed to reach the breadth of summer tourists visiting the Twin Cities Gateway Area. Based on discussions with Twin Cities Gateway representatives, sample sites were distributed across the nine communities in the Twin Cities Gateway Area (Appendix A). Data collection occurred on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and eight randomly selected weekdays throughout the summer (Appendix B).

Sampling quotas for each community were constructed based upon 2011 lodging tax receipts. For each participating community, local convention and visitor bureau leaders were consulted to provide specific sampling sites (e.g. community attractions, events, lodging, etc.). Site management was then contacted, asked to participate, and sampling times mutually agreed upon. Questionnaires were collected at a total of sixteen sites throughout the Twin Cities Gateway Area (Appendix C).

All questionnaires were administered in person via trained University of Minnesota Tourism Center staff. A convenience sampling approach was implemented where University of Minnesota Tourism Center staff asked passing individuals to complete questionnaires, attempting to rotate requests by potential respondent gender.

Respondent approach and screening

A series of screening questions assured the individual was a tourist (**Figure 1**). For the purposes of this study, a tourist was anyone who stayed one to 30 nights or who was on a day trip in an area at least 50 miles from their primary residence. Only leisure-related travelers were included; business and medical travelers were excluded. Mall of America Nickelodeon Universe Amusement Park tickets were offered as an incentive to complete the questionnaire.

Question 1: Are you a year-round, seasonal, or short-term resident of either this town or city or the immediate surrounding area?

Yes: Terminate

No: Continue

Question 2: Are you visiting this area for the day or have you/will you spend at least one night year?

Day visitor: Continue

Overnight: Give survey to respondent

Question 3: Have you travelled at least 50 miles from your primary residence to be here?

Yes: Give survey to respondent

No: Terminate

Figure 1 Screening questions for potential respondents to the 2012 Twin Cities Gateway Area Visitor Survey

Questionnaire

An on-site questionnaire was developed based on past research and with the assistance of project partners. Questionnaire sections included trip motivation, planning and information sources, transportation, accommodations, activities, group composition, and basic demographics (Appendix D).

Response rate

Throughout the summer of data collection, a total of 960 parties were contacted and 389 questionnaires obtained from eligible tourists, resulting in a 71% compliance rate (**Table 1**). A total of 4 surveys were unusable, thus 385 questionnaires were used for analysis. Nearly two-fifths (41.3%) of respondents were contacted in June (**Figure 2**) and a majority (90.6%) of respondents was contacted on a weekend (Friday afternoon thru Sunday) (**Figure 3**). Two-fifths of respondents completed the questionnaire while at an accommodation (**Figure 4**). Among those eligible who did not participate, 45.5% specified a lack of interest in participating.

Table 1 Non response among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey

	June		July		August		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
People contacted	348		438		174		960	
Ineligible (e.g. non-tourist)	134	38.5	226	51.6	55	31.6	415	43.2
Leisure-related tourist	214	61.5	212	48.4	119	68.4	545	56.8
Completed questionnaire	160	74.8	140	66.0	89	74.8	389	71.4
Non-response	54	25.2	72	34.0	30	25.2	156	28.6
Non-responders:								
<i>Gender:</i>								
Female	26	48.1	34	47.2	16	53.3	76	48.7
Male	28	51.9	38	52.8	14	46.7	80	51.3
<i>Reason:</i>								
Lack of interest	27	50.0	31	43.1	13	43.3	71	45.5
In a hurry	18	33.3	34	47.2	15	50.0	67	42.9
Already completed	9	16.7	3	4.2	0	0.0	12	7.7
Other	0	0.0	1	1.4	0	0.0	1	0.6
English is second language	0	0.0	1	1.4	2	6.7	3	1.9
Too hot	0	0.0	2	2.8	0	0.0	2	1.3
Compliance rate		74.8		66.0		74.8		71.4

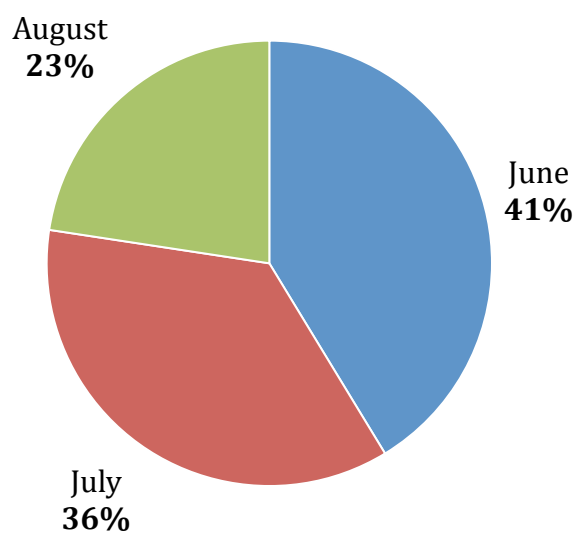


Figure 2 Month respondents completed 2012 Gateway Visitor Survey (n=385)

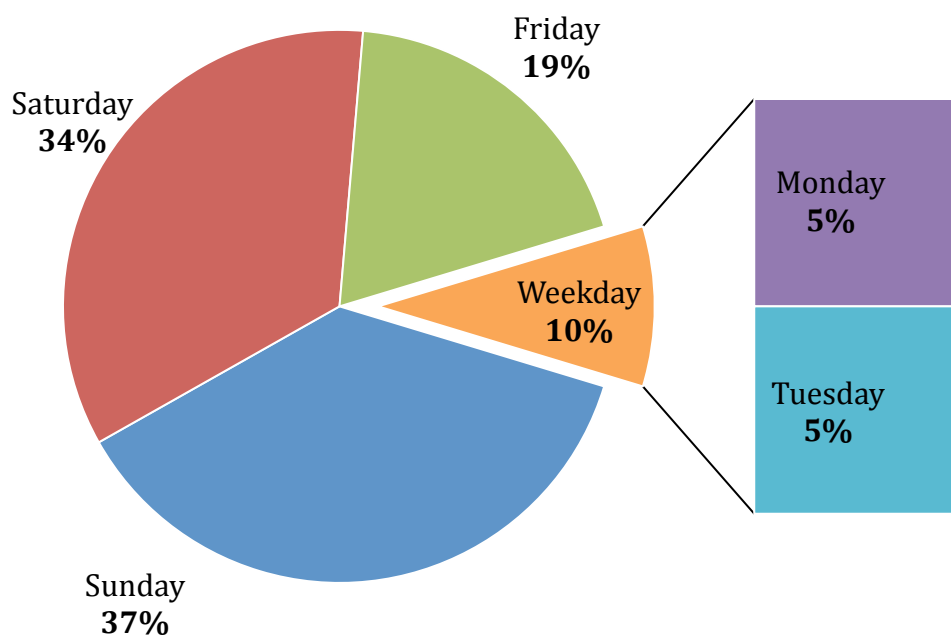


Figure 3 Day of the week respondents completed 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey (n=385)

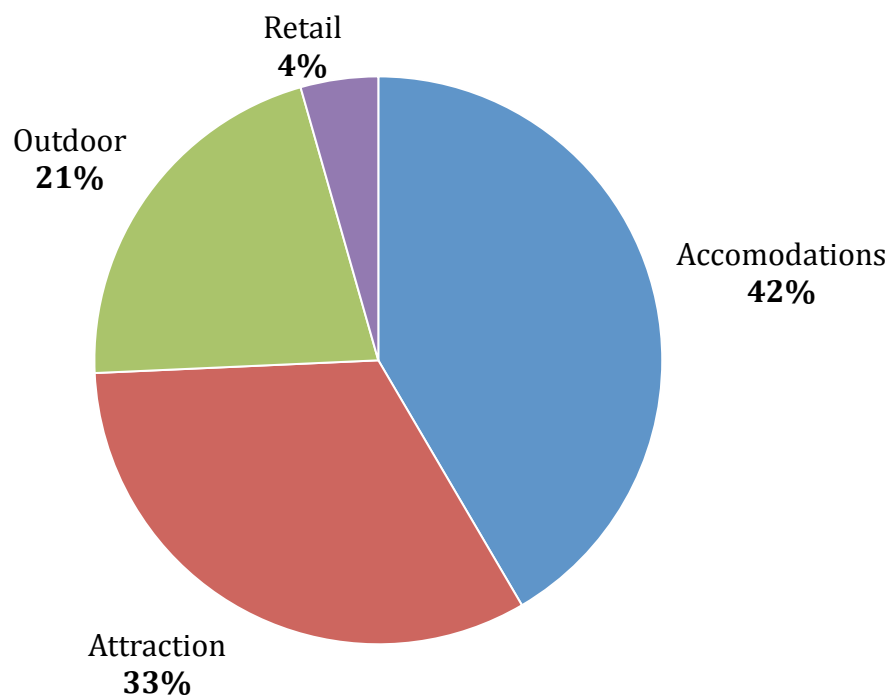


Figure 4 Location where respondents completed 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Surveys (n=385)

Analysis

Completed questionnaires were entered, cleaned and checked in SPSS version 19.0. Analysis provided means, medians, standard deviations, and frequencies to describe the sample and provide information on variables of interest. When individual responses were contributing to data skewness, they were winsorized to be where 90 to 95% of other responses were. When of interest, group comparisons by age groups, first time and repeat visitors, as well as lodging and activities were done with Chi-squares (χ^2). Trade Area analysis was conducted to create a customized trade area based upon the primary residence of visitors; the center of the trade area is the center-point of all domestic visitors' residences.

RESULTS

Within this section, results include an overview of respondent demographics, trip characteristics, and information sources used for trip planning.

Respondents

Demographics

More than half (54.5%) of respondents were female and the average age was 46 years ($M = 45.97$, $Mdn = 45$, $SD = 12.78$; **Figure 5**; **Figure 6**). Nearly four-fifths of respondents were from the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X (**Figure 7**). The most frequently reported annual pre-tax household income was between \$50,000 and \$99,999 (**Figure 8**).

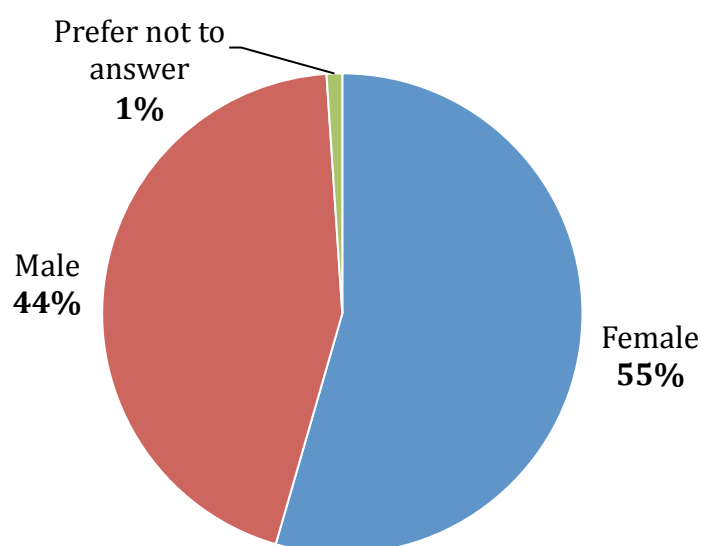


Figure 5 Gender of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=380)

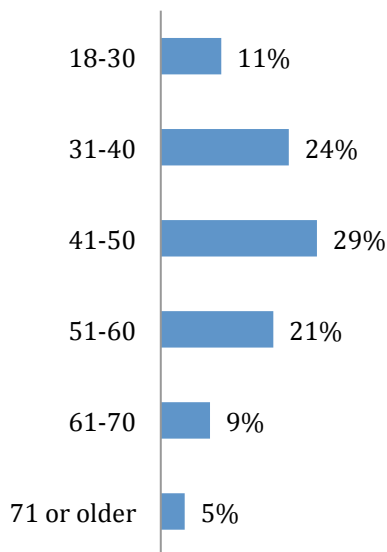


Figure 6 Age categories of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=377)

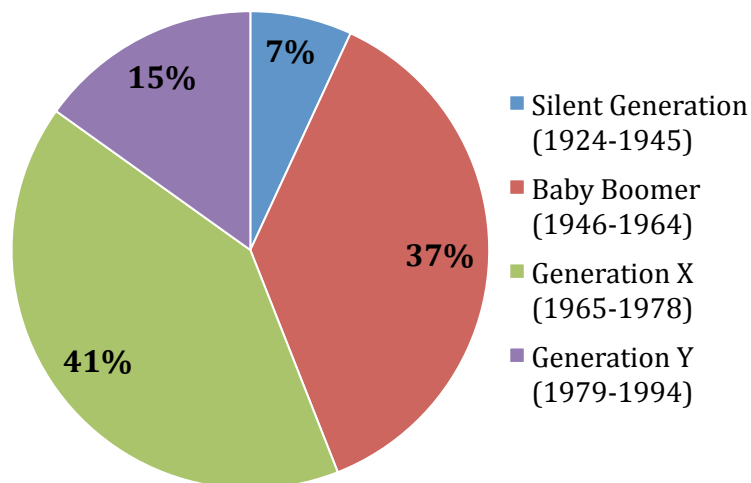


Figure 7 Generational split of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=377)

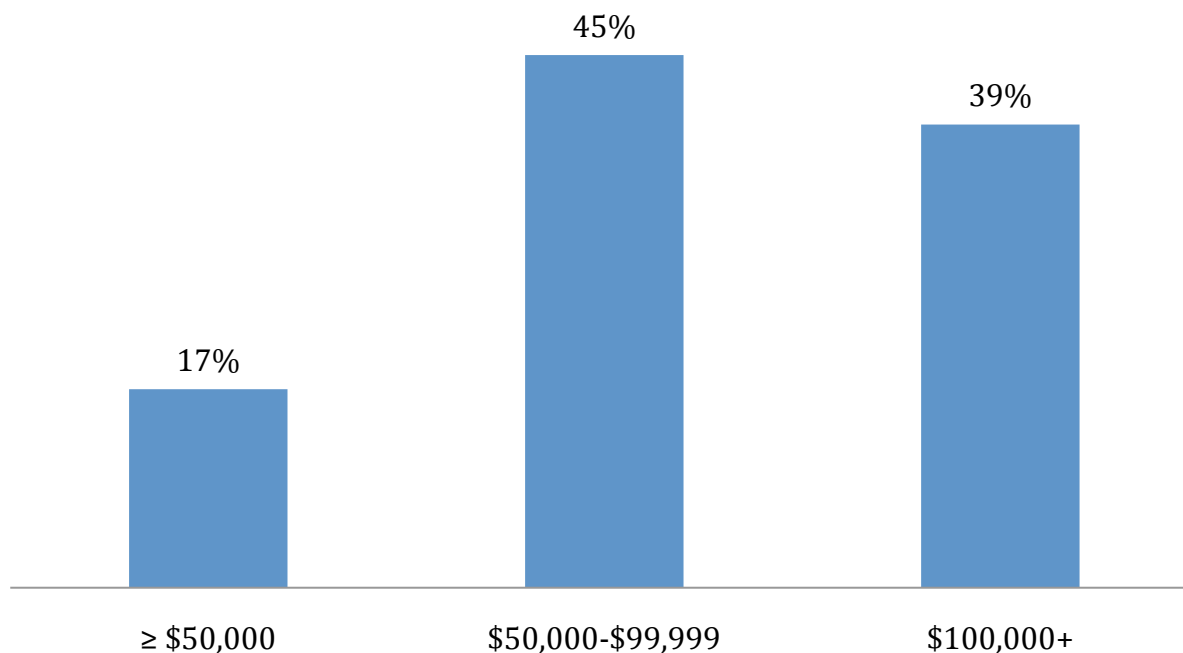


Figure 8 Pre-tax income groups of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=361)

Primary residence

Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents to the Twin Cities Gateway Area were from the United States (89.6%) (**Table 2**). The majority of domestic visitors were from the upper Midwest of the United States (**Figure 9**). Among international travelers, respondents were most frequently from Canada (7.6%).

Most frequently, domestic visitors were from the states of Minnesota (48.0%), Wisconsin (10.1%), and North Dakota (6.9%) (**Table 3**). The Minneapolis-St. Paul Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA), which encompasses an 11-county area in Minnesota and Wisconsin, was home to 29.0% of domestic visitors. Other frequently reported CBSAs included Fargo, ND-MN (5.4%), and St. Cloud, MN (3.8%) (**Table 3**).

Table 2 Primary country of residence of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=383)

	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
United States	343	89.6
Canada	29	7.6
Other	11	2.9
<i>United Kingdom</i>	5	1.3
<i>Australia</i>	1	0.3
<i>China</i>	1	0.3
<i>India</i>	1	0.3
<i>Peru</i>	1	0.3
<i>South Africa</i>	1	0.3
<i>Unspecified</i>	1	0.3

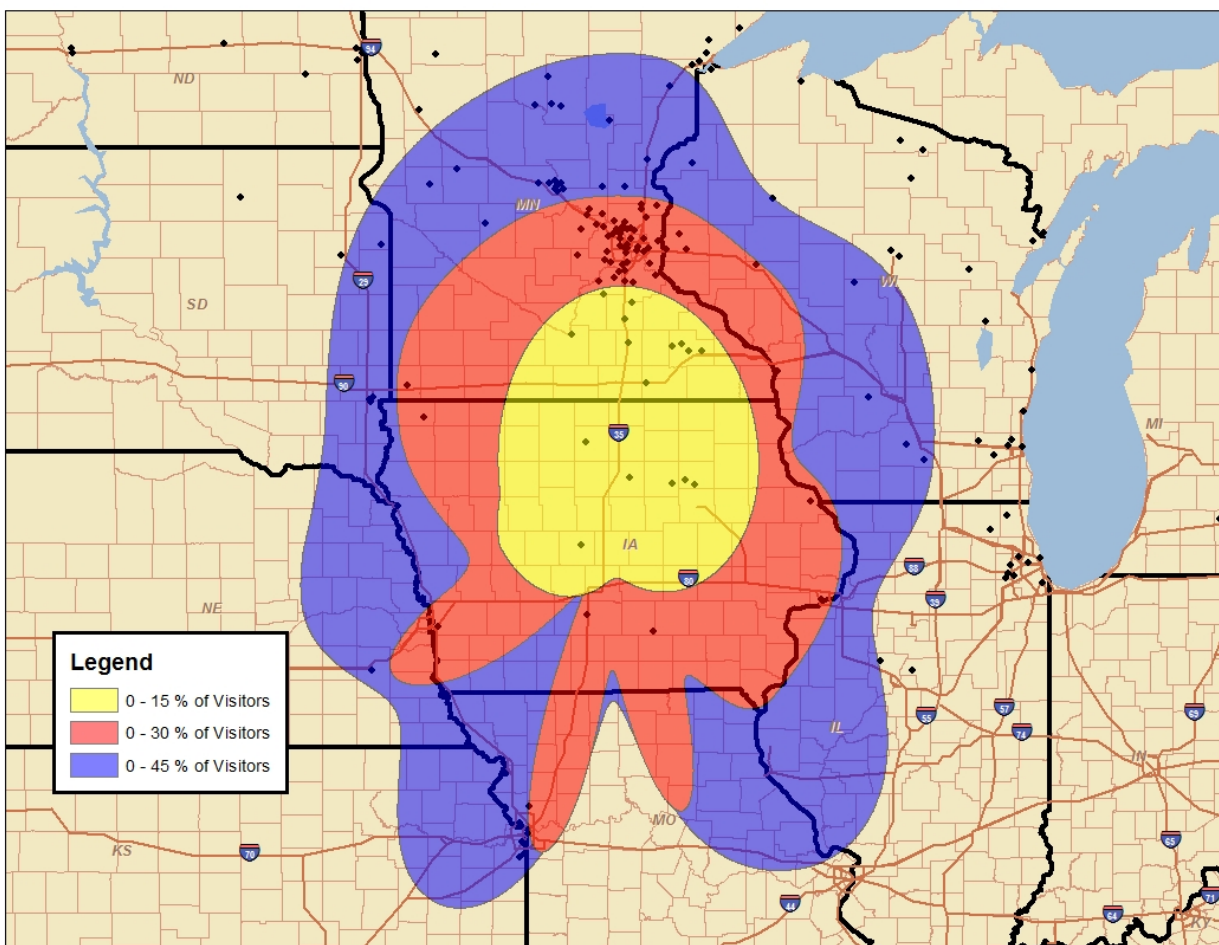


Figure 9 Trade area of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey domestic respondents (n=317)

Table 3 Primary place of residence of 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey domestic respondents (n=317)

Top 10 states		Top 10 Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSA)	
State	Percent (%)	CBSA	Percent (%)
Minnesota	48.0	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI	29.0
Wisconsin	10.1	Fargo, ND-MN	5.4
North Dakota	6.9	St. Cloud, MN	3.8
Iowa	4.7	Chicago, IL-IN-WI	4.5
South Dakota	4.1	Duluth, MN-WI	3.2
Illinois	4.1	Milwaukee, WI	2.5
California	2.2	Kansas City, MO-KS	2.2
Colorado	1.9	Brainerd, MN	2.2
Ohio	1.9	Sioux Falls, SD	1.9
Michigan	1.9	Washington, DC-VA-MD,WV	1.9

Past visitation

Over two-thirds of respondents (70.1%) had been to the Twin Cities Gateway Area at least once before. Among repeat visitors, respondents had most frequently been to the Twin Cities Gateway Area too many times to remember (**Figure 10**).

Within the past 12 months, respondents had made two-to-three trips to the area on average ($M = 2.51$, $Mdn = 1.00$, $SD = 2.85$), including their current trip. The majority (54.3%) of respondents, however, were making their first and only visit to the area in the past 12 months (**Figure 11**).

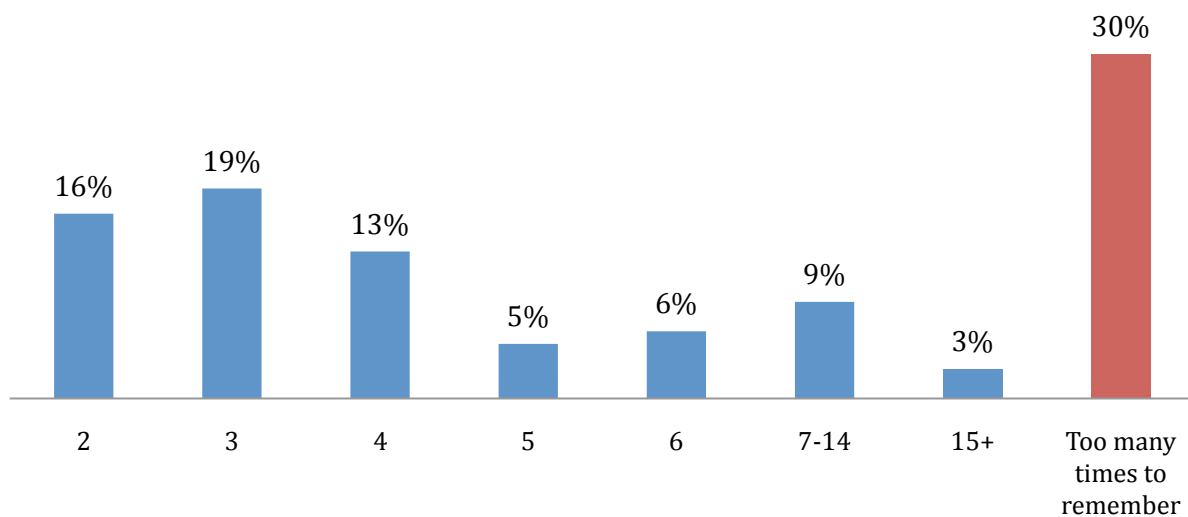


Figure 10 Previous trips to the Twin Cities Gateway area among repeat visitors completing 2012 Metropolitan Area Visitor Survey (n=270)

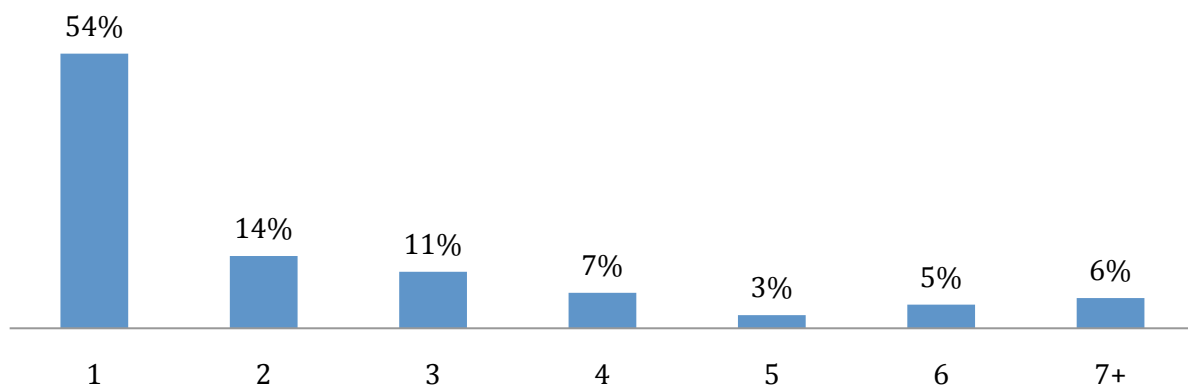


Figure 11 Number of visits to Twin Cities Gateway Area in past 12 months among 2012 Metropolitan Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=385)

2012 Trip information

Duration

More than 9 out of 10 respondents (94.2%) to the 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey spent at least one night in the area. Among all overnight visitors, the average respondent spent 3 nights in the area ($M = 2.85$, $Mdn = 2$, $SD = 1.89$; **Figure 12**).

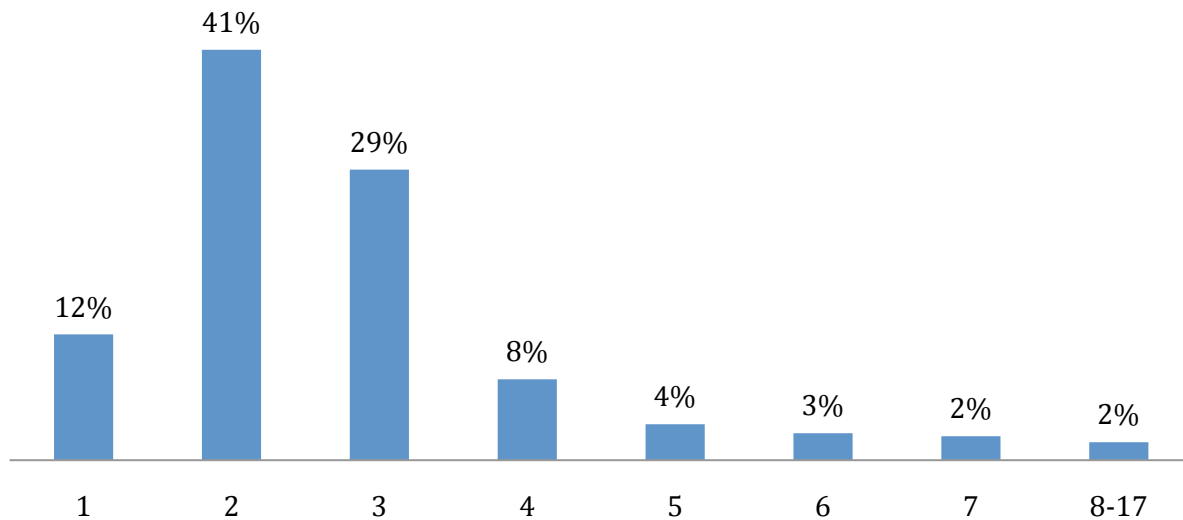


Figure 12 Number of nights stayed among overnight 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=338)

Lodging

The majority of respondents stayed in paid accommodations, most frequently a hotel, motel or historic inn (65.3%; **Figure 13**). A fifth of respondents stayed at a campground. Conversely, less than one tenth stayed in an accommodation with no charge, almost all of which stayed at the home of a family or friend.

Location was a primary driver for all lodging choices (**Figure 14**). Location was particularly important for those staying at a campground. Among hotel guests, special offers and price were also identified as primary reasons for lodging selection (**Figure 15**).

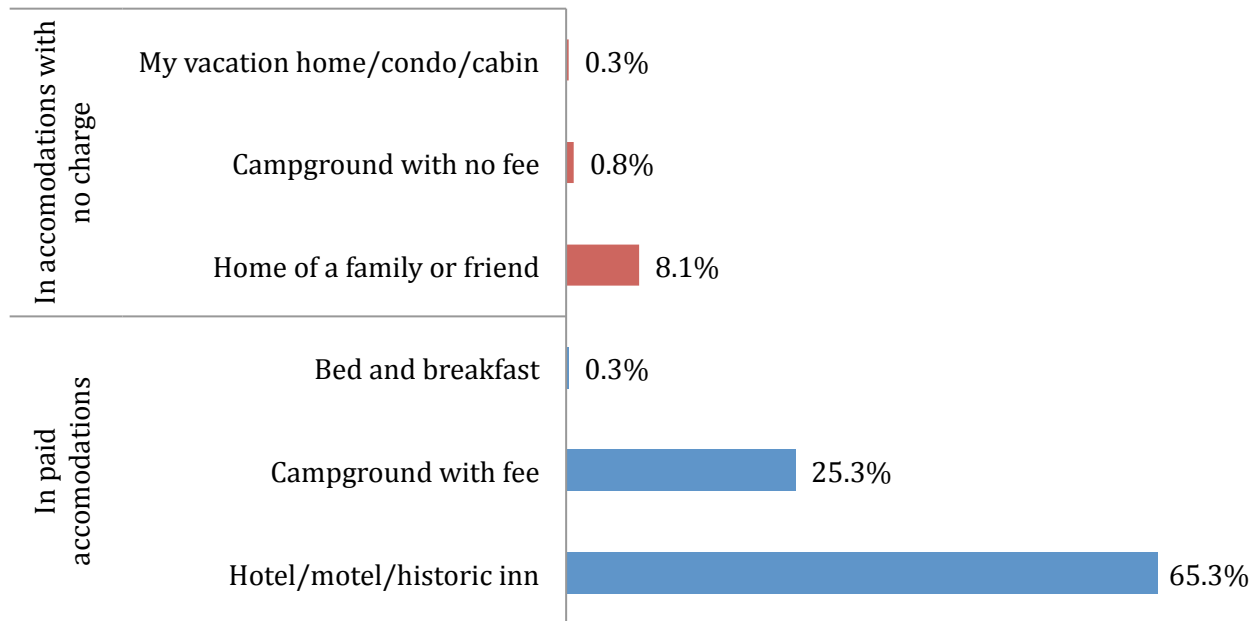


Figure 13 Accommodation type among overnight 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=360)

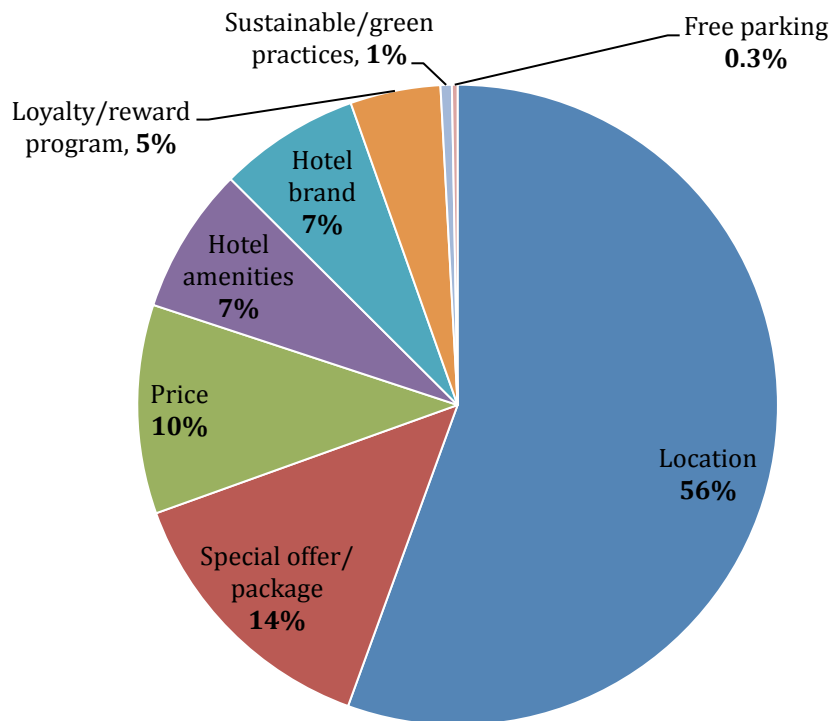


Figure 14 Primary reason for choosing lodging among overnight 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=351)

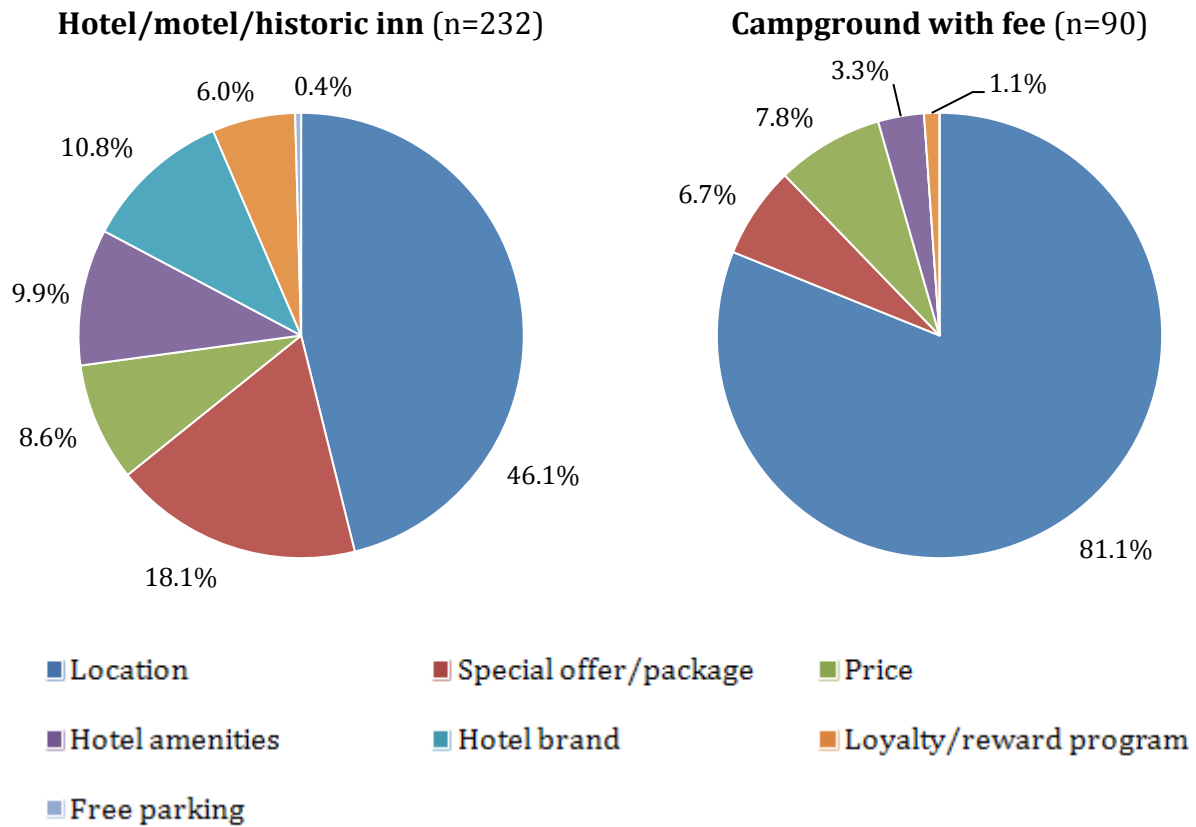


Figure 15 Primary reason for choosing lodging among select lodging types among overnight 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Transportation

The majority of survey respondents arrived to the area by car, van or truck (78.6%; **Figure 16**) although a tenth of respondents arrived by airplane and recreation vehicles/campers.

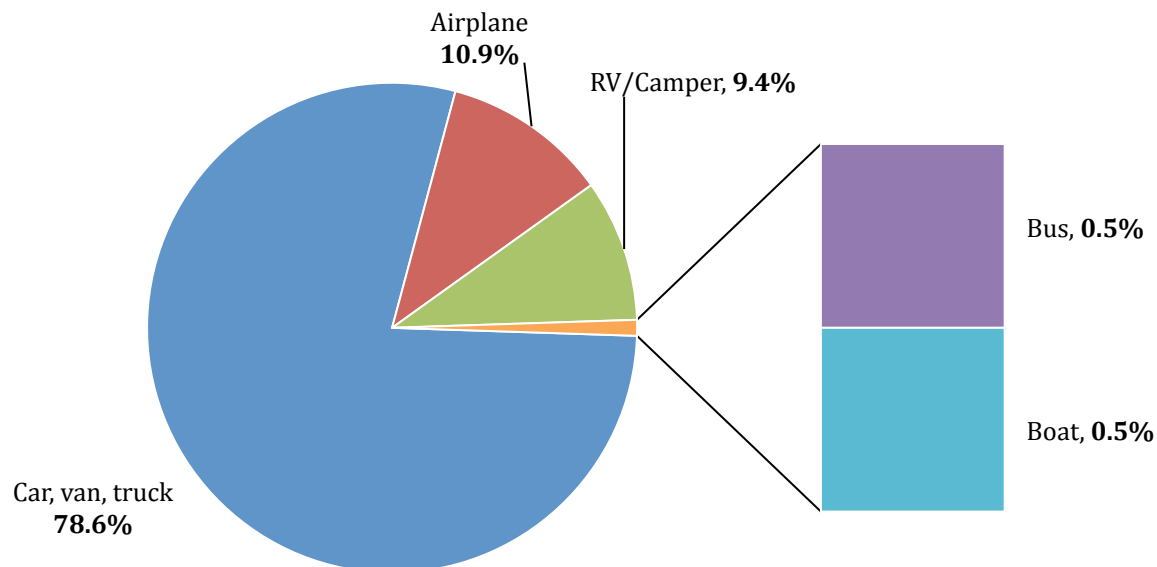


Figure 16 Primary mode of transportation among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=384)

Group composition and size

The average respondent was traveling in a group of four people ($M = 4.39$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $SD = 2.71$). Just over half of respondents (50.8%) were traveling with family (**Figure 17**) and nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.2%) were traveling with children under age 18. Children under 12 and between the ages of 12 and 17 were found in two-fifths of travel parties (**Figure 18**). Groups of friends, families or some combination thereof were in groups between four and six people (**Figure 19**).

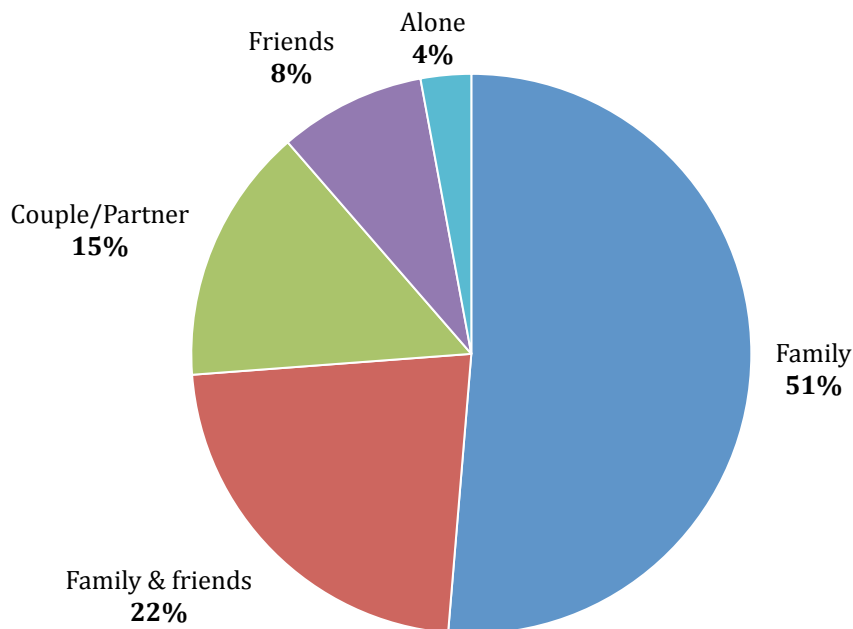


Figure 17 Group type among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=378)

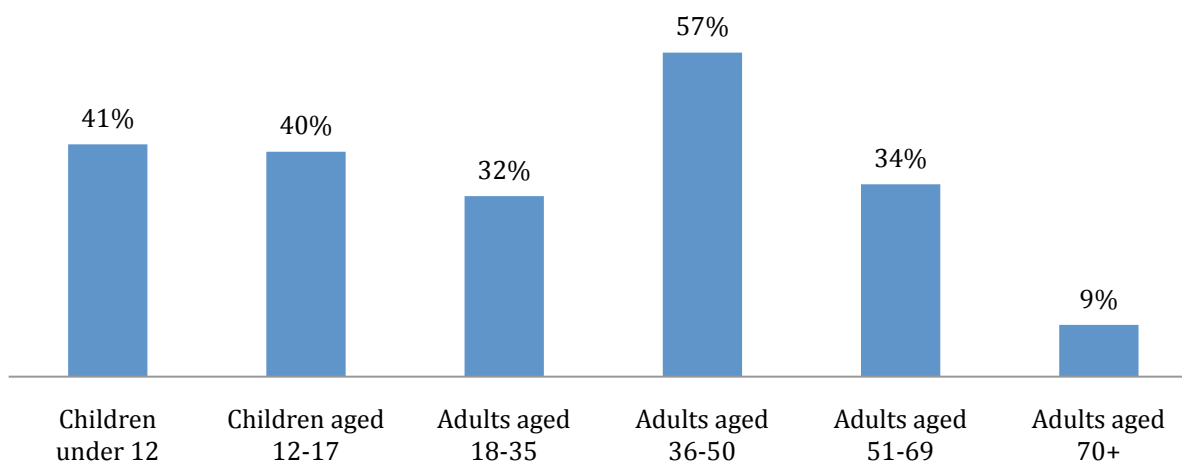


Figure 18 Age groups included in 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents travel party (n=382)

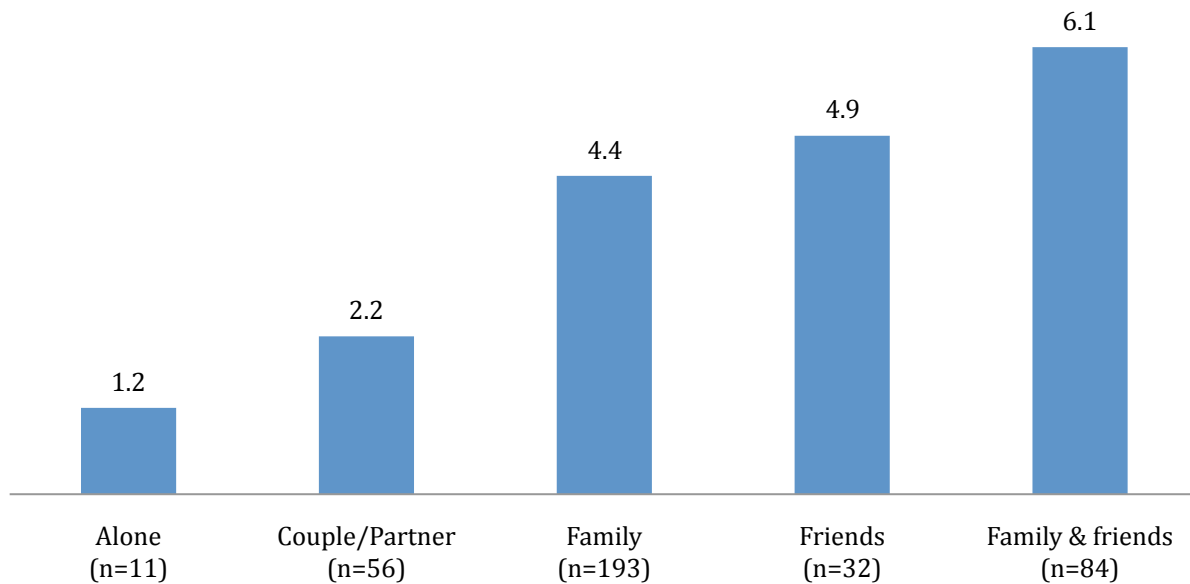


Figure 19 Average group size by group type among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Trip activities

Visitors participated in a variety of activities during their trip to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (**Figure 20**). Activity differences were examined among those traveling with and without children, and by generational grouping. Sample sizes were too small to compare day and overnight travelers.

Numerous significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in activity participation existed between respondents traveling with and without children (**Figure 21**). Visitors traveling with children, for example, were more likely to participate in swimming or water sports (34.5% vs. 19.4%), go to water parks (27.3% vs. 9.3%) or the Mall of America (21.7% vs. 9.3%), and attend an amateur or collegiate sporting event (16.5% vs. 4.7%). Visitors traveling without children, conversely, were more likely to visit friends or relatives (45.7% vs. 16.9%), go sightseeing (26.4% vs. 12.0%), shop for arts or antiques (13.2% vs. 4.0%), and go out for nightlife (22.5% vs. 10.0%).

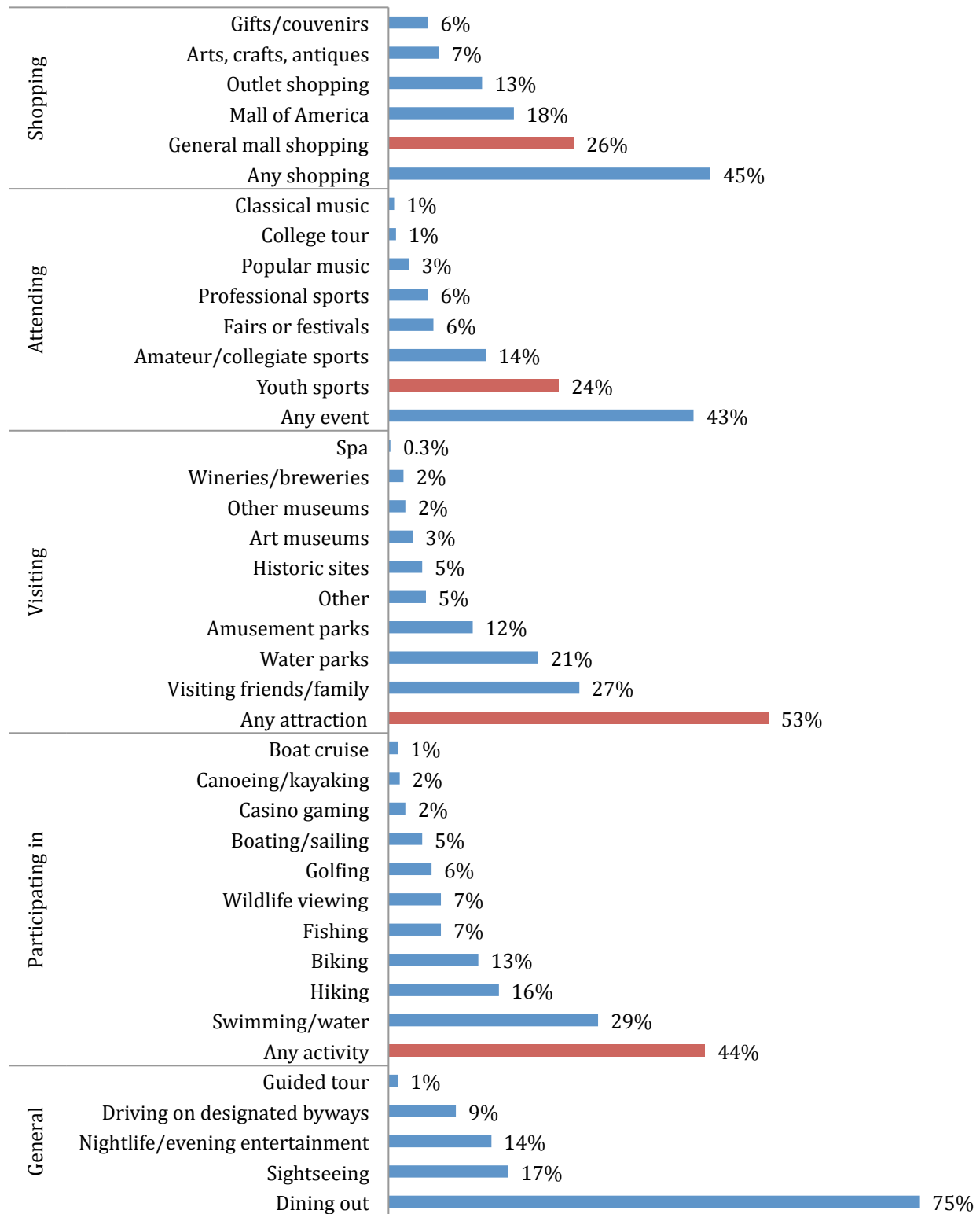


Figure 20 Activities participated in among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=380)

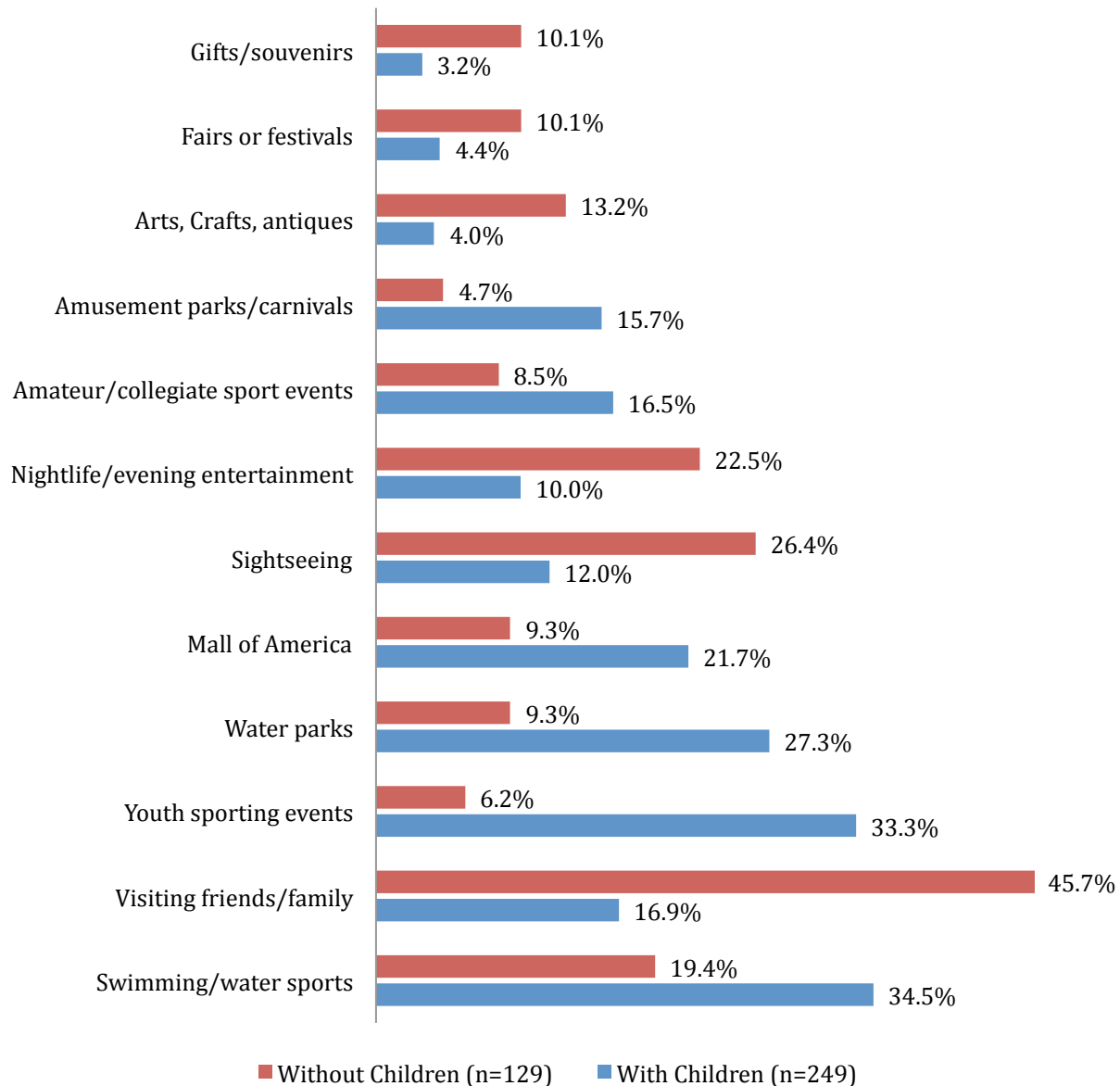


Figure 21 Significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in activity participation among visitors traveling with and without children among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Several significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in activity participation by generation emerged (Table 4). For example, the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers were more likely to go sightseeing, but less likely to participate in swimming and water sports. Members of the Silent Generation were more likely to visit friends or family, but the least likely to attend youth sports. Members of Generation Y were significantly less likely to attend an amateur or collegiate sporting event.

Table 4 Differences in activity participation among generational groups in 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

	Percentage (%) of generation visiting attraction				Statistics	
	Silent Generation (1924-45) (n=25)	Baby Boomer (1946-64) (n=138)	Generation X (1965-78) (n=154)	Generation Y (1979-94) (n=57)	χ^2	Sig.
General						
Dining out	76.0	76.8	75.3	68.4	1.57	.666
Sightseeing	28.0	23.9	9.7	12.3	13.70	.003 **
Nightlife	20.0	15.2	9.7	22.8	6.68	.083
Designated byways	16.0	9.4	9.7	3.5	3.69	.297
Guided tour ¹	4.0	2.2	0.6	0.0	---	---
Participating in						
Swimming/water sports	20.0	20.3	36.4	40.4	13.28	.004 **
Hiking	4.0	18.1	14.3	15.8	3.45	.327
Biking	8.0	10.9	14.9	14.0	1.68	.642
Fishing ¹	4.0	5.1	10.4	7.0	---	---
Wildlife viewing ¹	4.0	8.0	6.5	7.0	---	---
Golfing ¹	4.0	5.1	6.5	8.8	---	---
Boating/sailing ¹	0.0	5.8	4.5	5.3	---	---
Casino gaming ¹	4.0	2.9	1.3	3.5	---	---
Canoeing/kayaking ¹	4.0	0.0	1.3	5.3	---	---
Boat cruise ¹	0.0	2.2	0.6	1.8	---	---
Visiting						
Friends/family	60.0	29.7	17.5	33.3	22.34	.000 ***
Water parks	4.0	15.2	29.2	22.8	13.31	.004 **
Amusement parks	4.0	5.8	18.8	8.8	14.34	.002 **
Other ¹	12.0	6.5	3.2	5.3	---	---
Historic Sites ¹	12.0	5.8	3.2	1.8	---	---
Art museums ¹	8.0	4.3	3.2	0.0	---	---
Other museums ¹	8.0	2.2	1.9	1.8	---	---
Wineries/breweries ¹	12.0	2.2	0.6	1.8	---	---
Spa ¹	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	---	---
Attending						
Youth sports	8.0	18.8	35.7	10.5	22.91	.000 ***
Amateur/collegiate sports	12.0	18.1	14.3	1.8	9.30	.026 *
Fairs or festivals ¹	0.0	8.7	3.2	12.3	---	---
Professional sports ¹	4.0	4.3	5.2	8.8	---	---
Popular music show ¹	0.0	5.1	1.9	1.8	---	---
College tour/ visit ¹	4.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	---	---
Classical music concerts ¹	0.0	1.4	0.0	1.8	---	---
Shopping						
General mall shopping	40.0	29.0	26.0	15.8	6.16	.104
Mall of America	12.0	17.4	22.1	8.8	5.73	.126
Outlet shopping	8.0	10.9	16.2	14.0	2.48	.479
Arts, Crafts, antiques ¹	12.0	10.1	5.2	3.5	---	---
Gifts/souvenirs ¹	4.0	9.4	4.5	0.0	---	---

Notes:

¹ Response too low for statistical comparisons* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

Trip purpose and planning

Primary reason for making trip

Respondents most frequently indicated that the primary reason for the trip was to attend a sporting event (35%), but visiting friends or friends and attractions were also a frequently cited reasons for the trip (22% and 14%, respectively; **Figure 22**). Outdoor recreation, weddings, and festivals and/or events were primary reasons to visit the Twin Cities Gateway Area for 6-10% of respondents. All other reasons were much less frequently identified as a primary reason to visit the Twin Cities Gateway Area.

When examined by group type, attending sporting events was the primary reason for making the trip for family, friends, or some combination thereof. Respondents traveling as a couple, however, were traveling primarily for visiting friends or family and were less likely to attend sporting events (**Table 5**). Attractions were a notable draw only for respondents traveling as a family. Unfortunately, the sample of respondents traveling alone was too small to make meaningful comparisons of solo travelers.

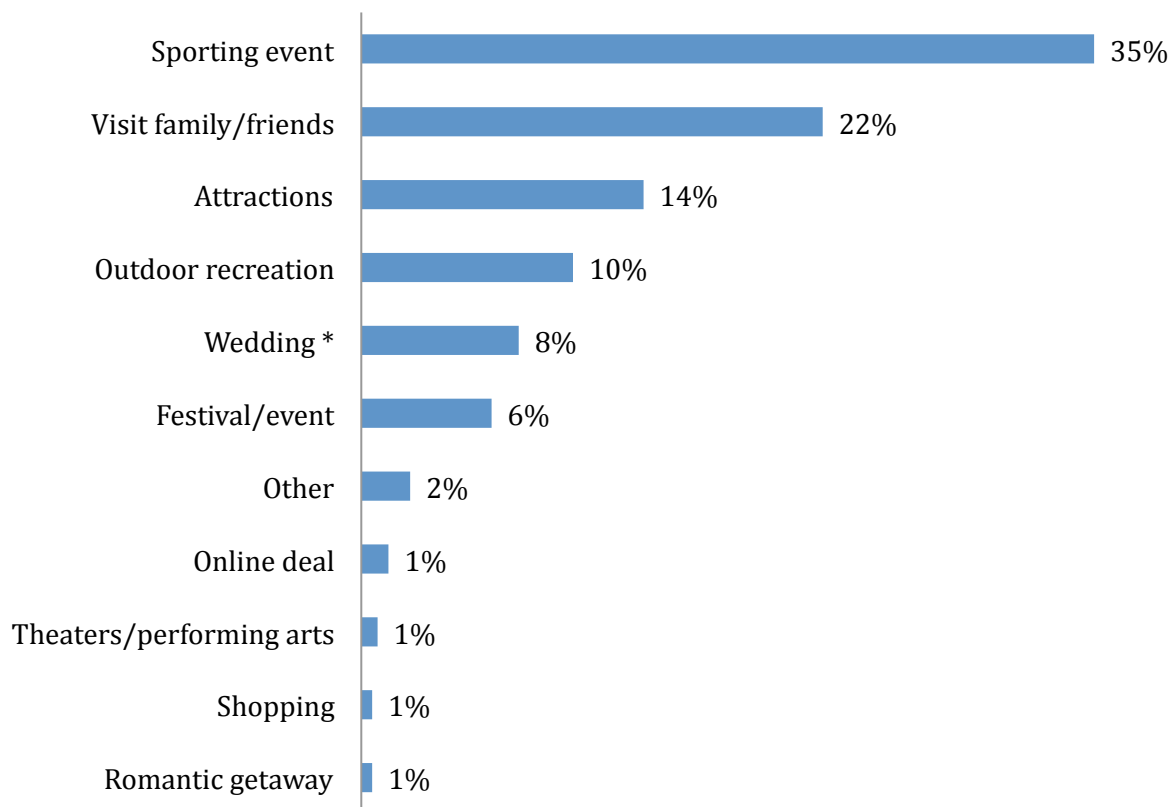


Figure 22 Primary reason for making leisure trip to Twin Cities Gateway Area among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=385)

Note: "Wedding" added based upon large number of write-in responses

Table 5 Primary reason for making leisure trip to Twin Cities Gateway Area among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey group types

	<i>Percentage (%) of group type¹</i>			
	Couple/Partner (n=58)	Family (n=194)	Friends (n=32)	Family & friends (n=85)
Sporting event	13.8	37.6	43.8	41.2
Visit family/friends	29.3	22.2	28.1	14.1
Attractions	8.6	16.5	0.0	17.6
Outdoor recreation	13.8	8.8	12.5	11.8
Wedding ²	13.8	5.7	6.3	5.9
Festival/event	13.8	4.6	9.4	4.7
Other	0.0	2.1	0.0	1.2
Online deal	0.0	1.0	0.0	3.5
Theaters/performing arts	1.7	1.0	0.0	0.0
Romantic getaway	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Shopping	1.7	0.5	0.0	0.0

Notes:

¹ Sample of respondents traveling alone too small for reliable comparison

² “Wedding” added based upon large number of write-in responses

Trip planning timeframe and information sources

Nearly two-thirds of all respondents (63.1%) planned their trip a month or more in advance (**Figure 23**). Nearly a fifth of respondents (18.3%), however, planned their trip within two weeks of its occurrence.

In terms of most frequently used, family and friends, area/destination website and online reviews were the most frequently used information sources. Notably, however, while family and friends and area/destination websites were also cited as the most important information source used, more respondents chose “other” than online travel sites as their most important information source (**Figure 24**).

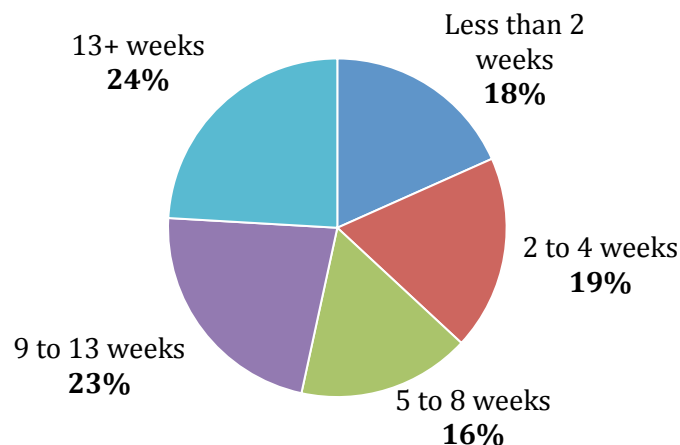


Figure 23 Trip planning time frame among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n=382)

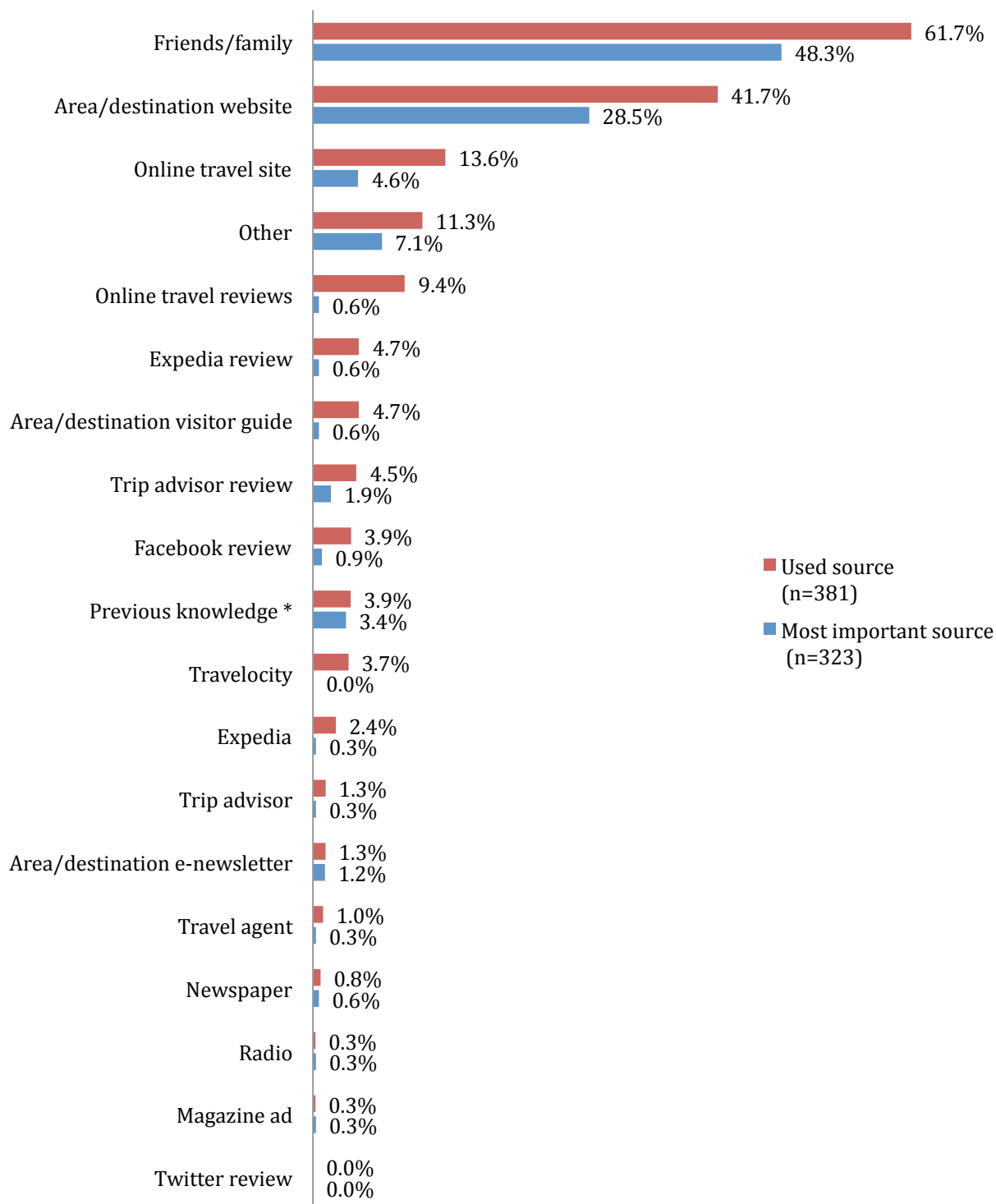


Figure 24 Information sources used by, and identified as most important by, 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Note: "Previous knowledge" added based upon large number of write-in responses

The two most important information sources, “friends/family” and “area/destination website”, hold across generational groups (**Table 6**), type of group (**Table 7**), and past visitation (**Figure 25**).

Table 6 Most important information sources for trip planning among generational groups in the 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

	<i>Percentage (%) of generation listing source as most important</i>			
	Silent Generation (1924-45) (n=24)	Baby Boomers (1946-64) (n=113)	Generation X (1965-78) (n=132)	Generation Y (1979-94) (n=47)
Family/friends	62.5	43.4	45.5	59.6
Area/destination website	16.7	29.2	31.8	23.4
Other	8.3	8.8	7.6	2.1
Online travel sites	0.0	5.3	3.8	6.4
Previous knowledge *	8.3	3.5	3.0	2.1
Trip advisor reviews	0.0	3.5	1.5	0.0
Area/destination e-newsletter	0.0	0.9	1.5	2.1
Facebook reviews	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.1
Area/destination visitor guide	0.0	0.9	0.8	0.0
Newspaper	0.0	0.9	0.0	2.1
Online travel reviews	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0
Expedia reviews	0.0	0.9	0.8	0.0
Magazine ad	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0
Expedia	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
Trip advisor	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
Radio	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
Travel agent	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note: “Previous knowledge” added based upon large number of write-in responses

Table 7 Most important information sources for trip planning among group types for 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Information source	<i>Percentage (%) of group type listing source as most important ¹</i>			
	Couple/Partner (n=51)	Family (n=163)	Friends (n=26)	Family & friends (n=73)
Family/friends	37.3	54.6	46.2	42.5
Area/destination website	33.3	23.9	26.9	38.4
Other	0.0	8.6	11.5	5.5
Online travel sites	3.9	4.9	7.7	2.7
Previous knowledge ²	11.8	1.2	0.0	4.1
Trip advisor reviews	3.9	1.8	0.0	1.4
Area/destination e-newsletter	2.0	1.2	3.8	0.0
Facebook reviews	2.0	1.2	0.0	0.0
Area/destination visitor guide	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7
Newspaper	2.0	0.0	3.8	0.0
Online travel reviews	3.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expedia reviews	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0
Magazine ad	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
Expedia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Trip advisor	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0
Radio	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
Travel agent	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0

Notes:

¹ Sample of respondents traveling alone too small for reliable comparison

² "Wedding" added based upon large number of write-in responses

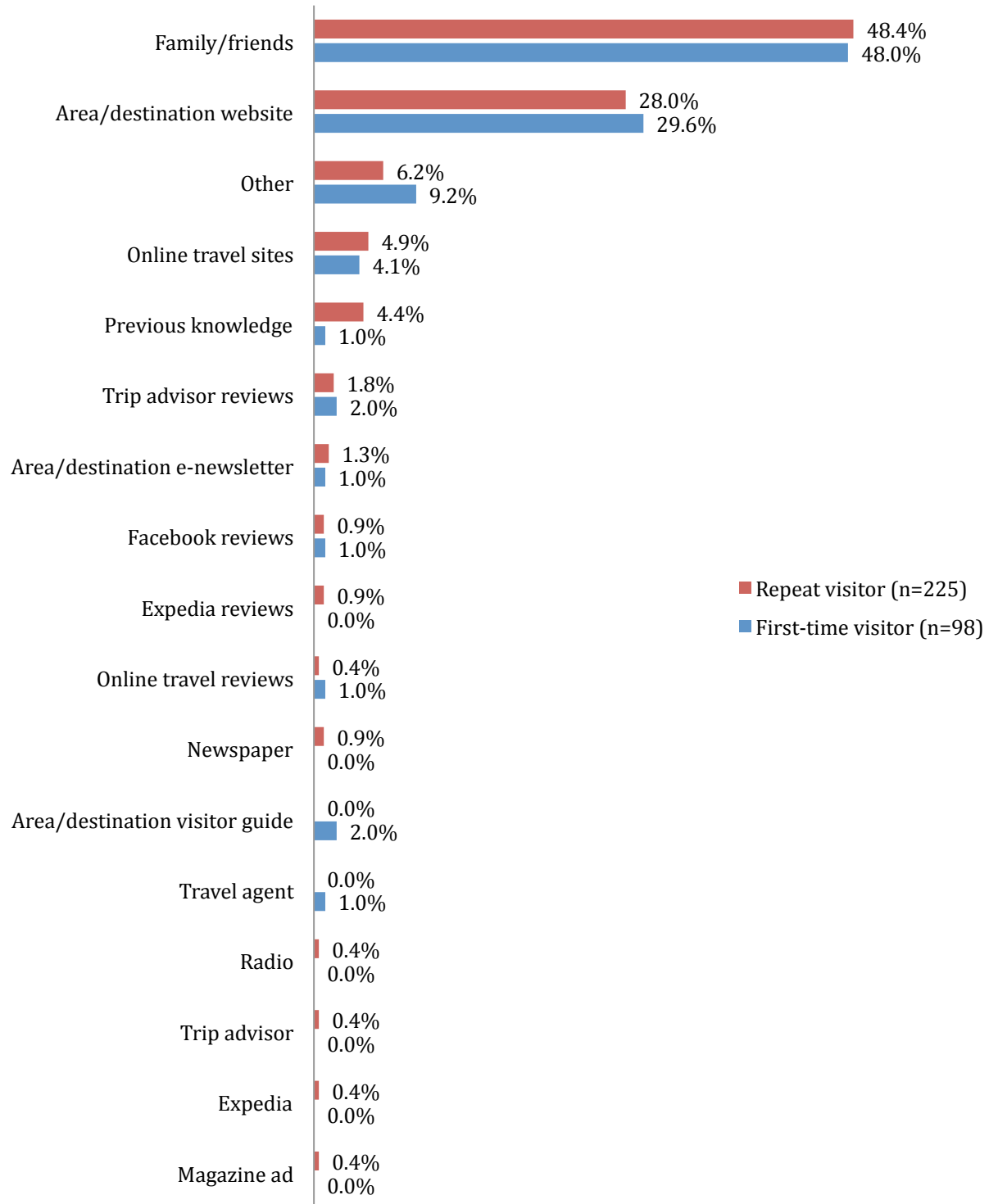


Figure 25 Most important information sources for trip planning among first-time and repeat visitors of the 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Use of social media during trip

Respondents used a variety of mobile and electronic media to share and get information during their trip (**Figure 26**). Over half of respondents (53.0%) reported using the internet and/or websites to get or share information. Facebook was the most frequently used social media site (31.6%), while other social media sites such as Twitter (2.6%) and Yelp (1.8%) were less frequently used. Respondents reported using a large variety of mobile media, including smartphones (33.8%), text messaging (22.3%), mobile apps (12.7%), and iPads and tablets (12.7%).

The majority of respondents (87.7%) did not change their original travel plans based upon information found on social media (**Figure 27**). A tenth of respondents reported making minor changes to their original travel plans based on social media, while just over one percent reported making significant changes. Members of the Silent Generation appeared slightly less likely to change their plans based on social media, however the sample was too small for statistical tests of significance (**Figure 28**).

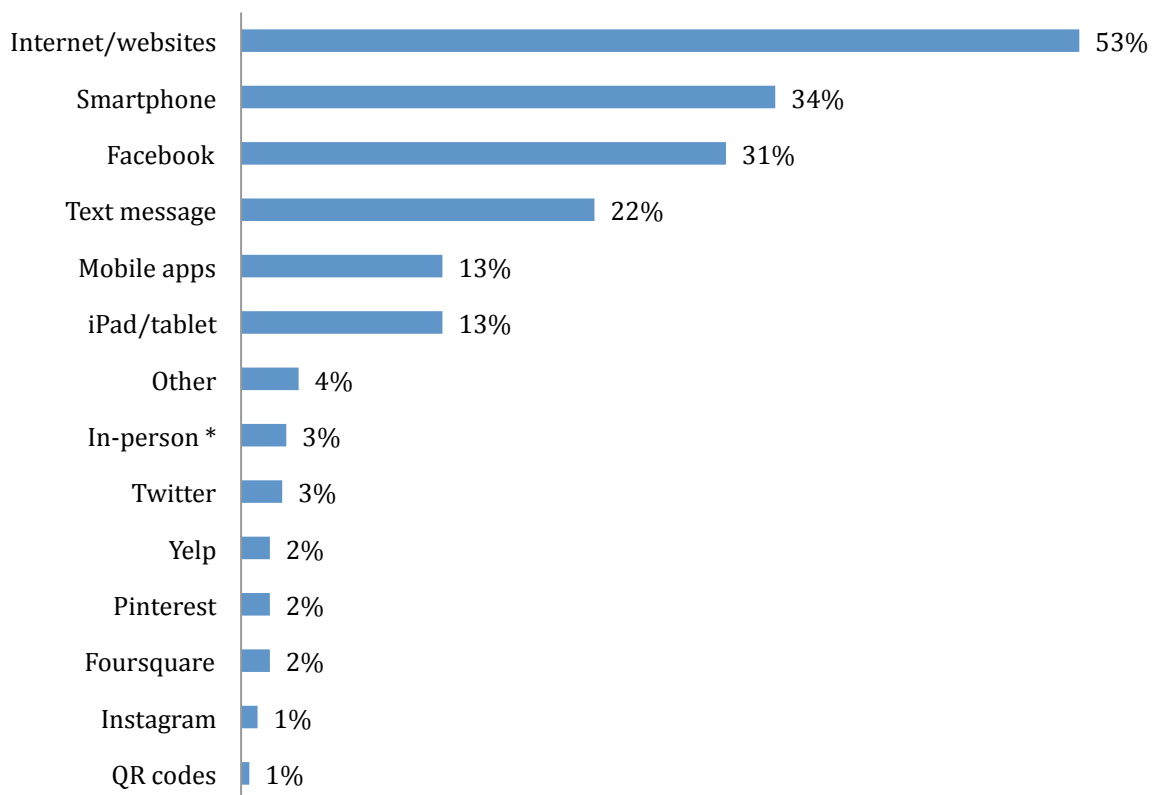


Figure 26 Information sharing and acquisition sources among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents during their trip (n=385)

Note: "In person" added based upon large number of write-in responses

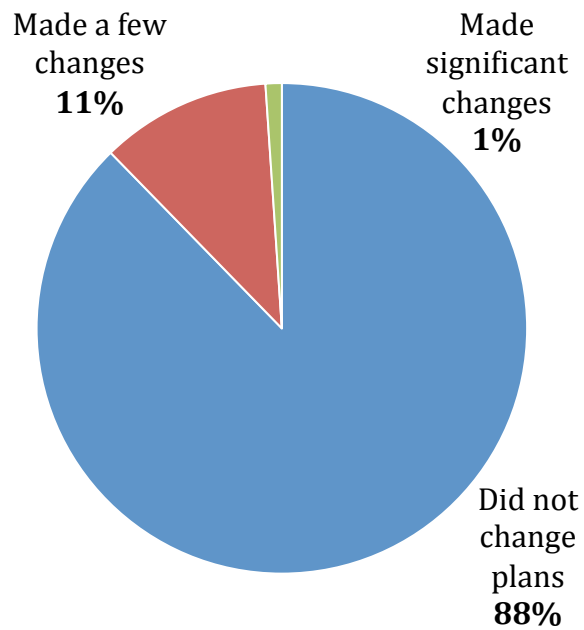


Figure 27 Impact of social media on original travel plans among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents (n = 374)

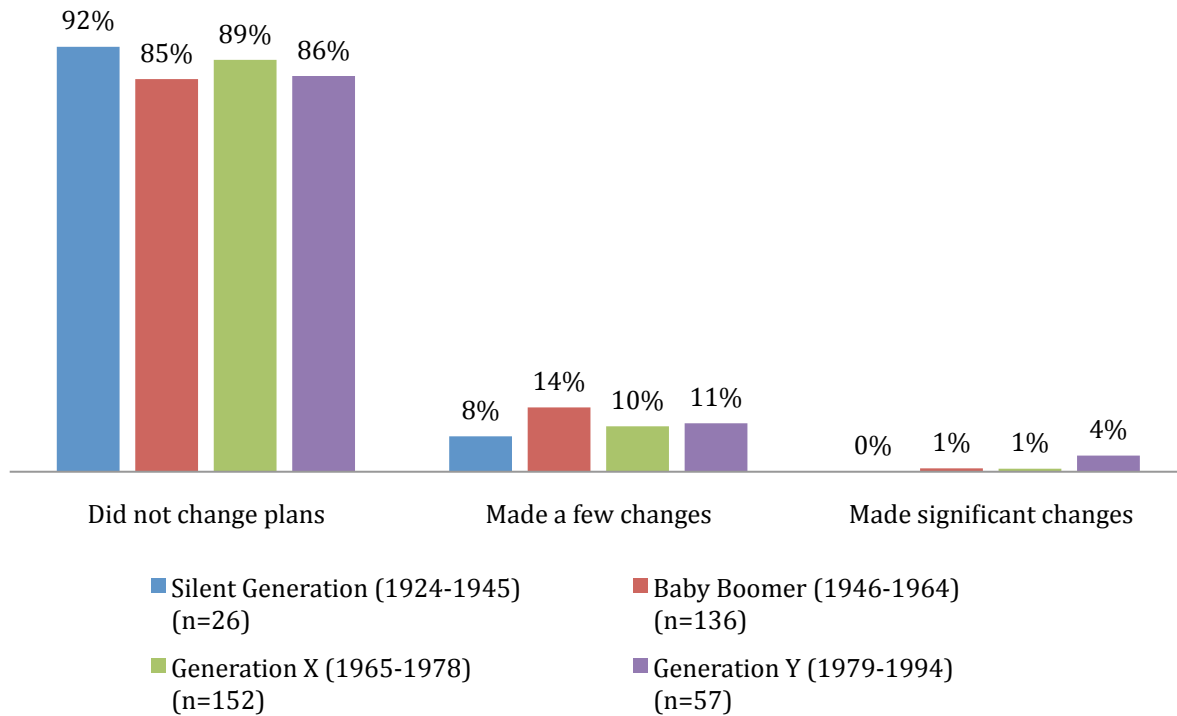


Figure 28 Impact of social media information on original travel plans by generation among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

A comparison of media sources used to share and get information across generations revealed notable differences (**Table 8**). While no statistical differences were found across generations for general use of the internet, smartphones, iPads or tablets, or mobile apps, Generation Y was significantly more likely to use Facebook and text messages to share or get information during their trip. Generally, there was an inverse relationship between using Facebook and texting and age.

Table 8 Comparison of social media sources and mobile devices used to share and get information across generations among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Media	Percentage (%) of generation using media				Statistics	
	Silent Generation (1924-45) (n=26)	Baby Boomers (1946-64) (n=140)	Generation X (1965-78) (n=154)	Generation Y (1979-94) (n=57)	χ^2	Sig.
Facebook	7.7	20.0	36.4	52.6	29.17	.000 ***
Internet/websites	61.5	59.3	51.9	38.6	7.79	.051
Smartphone	19.2	30.7	39.0	36.8	5.07	.167
Text message	7.7	20.7	20.8	38.6	12.24	.007 **
iPad/tablet	0.0	12.9	15.6	12.3	4.82	.185
Mobile apps	3.8	12.1	13.6	14.0	2.11	.551
Other ²	3.8	5.7	3.2	0.0	---	---
Twitter ²	0.0	1.4	2.6	7.0	---	---
In-person ^{1, 2}	11.5	3.6	1.3	0.0	---	---
Foursquare ²	0.0	0.0	3.2	3.5	---	---
Pinterest ²	0.0	0.0	3.2	3.5	---	---
Yelp ²	0.0	1.4	2.6	1.8	---	---
Instagram ²	0.0	0.0	1.3	3.5	---	---
QR codes ²	0.0	0.7	0.6	0.0	---	---

¹ "In person" added based upon large number of write-in responses

² Responses too low for statistical comparisons

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

Two type of media used were related to changing original travel plans because of other travelers' opinions, reviews, photos, videos, or other information found on social media websites (**Table 9**). Visitors who used iPads or another tablet and smartphones were more likely to make at least a few changes to their travel plans than others. For example, while only 12.3% of all respondents changed their original travel plans based on social media, 28.6% of tablet users did.

Table 9 Change in original travel plans based on social media by media source and media device among 2012 Gateway Area Visitor Survey respondents

Media	Percentage (%)		Statistics		
	Made at least a few changes ¹	Did not change plans	χ^2	Sig.	
iPad/tablet (n=49)	28.6	71.4	13.84	.000	***
Mobile apps (n=48)	18.8	81.3	2.12	.145	
Smartphone (n=128)	18.0	82.0	5.80	.016	**
Text message (n=85)	16.5	83.5	1.77	.183	
Internet/websites (n=197)	13.7	86.3	0.76	.382	
Facebook (n=115)	10.4	89.6	0.54	.464	
Twitter (n=10) ²	40.0	60.0	---	---	
Yelp (n=7) ²	28.6	71.4	---	---	
Foursquare (n=7) ²	14.3	85.7	---	---	
Pinterest (n=7) ²	14.3	85.7	---	---	
Other (n=14) ²	7.1	92.9	---	---	
Instagram (n=4) ²	0.0	100.0	---	---	
QR codes (n=2) ²	0.0	100.0	---	---	

¹ In total sample, 12.3% of respondents made at least a few changes to their plans

² Responses too low for statistical comparison

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

BRIEF DISCUSSION

The 2012 summer visitor to the Twin Cities Gateway area is demographically comparable to the 2007 Metropolitan visitor in terms of age, income, and trip characteristics (as reported by Davidson-Peterson, 2008). While the data is not directly comparable due to sampling sizes, timeframes, and area, such comparisons are of interest,

Information sources for trip planning in 2012 were similar to those in the 2007 metro study (Davidson-Peterson, 2008) in that family and friends and generally ‘the internet’ were still important and frequently used sources. However, the 2012 study differentiated types of internet sites and social media used to obtain and share information, based on the evolving marketplace. This report explored the use of information sources and activities in depth by group type, generational group and visitation pattern. Each of these analyses provides insight for niche and targeted marketing opportunities.

This profile of Twin Cities Gateway visitors was conducted simultaneously with a profile of Twin Cities Metropolitan Area visitors, and several differences between the two visitor segments are worth highlighting. First, the Twin Cities Gateway visitors were more frequently from Minnesota than Metropolitan Area visitors (48% vs 29%). Second, visitors to the Twin Cities Gateway were far more likely to be camping than were Metropolitan Area visitors (26.1% vs 4.3%). Notably, however, sampling in the Twin Cities Gateway

sample included two campgrounds, while the Metropolitan survey sampled no campgrounds. Third, activity participation differed between Twin Cities Gateway and Metropolitan visitors. Twin Cities Gateway visitors were more likely to attend both youth sporting events (24% vs 4%), amateur or collegiate sporting events (14% vs 3%), and visit water parks (21% vs 14%). Conversely, Twin Cities Gateway visitors were less likely to go shopping (45% vs 64%), visit amusement parks (12% vs 23%), go on guided tours (1% vs 9%), and go sightseeing (17% vs 45%). While visiting friends and/or family was a primary reason for both Twin Cities Gateway and Metropolitan Area visitors, Gateway visitors were likelier visiting for sporting events (35% vs 7%) and less likely to be visiting primarily for area attractions (14% vs 30%). Twin Cities Gateway and Metropolitan area visitors were similar in terms of income, past visitation, duration of trip, travel group type and size, and information sources used.

There are several ways to approach the Twin Cities Gateway market. Depending on resources available, segmenting the market by activities (emphasizing sports and outdoors), age groups (boomers and generation x), would be useful.

Given the rapidly changing online marketplace, the use of social media and various media platforms is of significant interest and a major trend (Smith, 2012). While friends and family remained the primary and most important information source for the majority of the respondents, area websites was a very highly used second source of information for trip planning. However, online travel sites and reviews were used by about 10% of respondents and are increasingly of use as important information sites.

Results indicate that sharing travel experiences via Facebook and texting was negatively related to age, similar to Ip, Lee and Law (2010) and Broner and de Hogg (2011). While research is evolving in this area, Broner and de Hogg (2011) found five primary factors for information sharing/eWOM about travel: 1) for economic gain, 2) to help others, 3) to create a sense of community, 4) for consumer empowerment and 5) to help companies. Smith (2012) reports that consumers are overwhelmed with the amount of data available to them. Subsequently, Smith encourages destinations to provide opportunities for consumers to customize their information and provide direct access to information most important to them.

Although respondent's demographic makeup does not appear to have changed substantially since 2007, their use of information sources has. Updating the profile information every three to five years is recommended to address the evolving marketplace.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Study area



Appendix B: Weekday sampling

Monday, June 25

Tuesday, July 3

Wednesday, July 11

Tuesday, July 24

Thursday, August 2

Monday, August 6

Wednesday, August 8

Thursday, August 16

Appendix C: Study sites

Accommodations	
AmericInn Hotel & Suites Mounds View, MN	Best Western Plus Coon Rapids, MN
Country Inn & Suites Coon Rapids, MN	Hampton Inn North Shoreview, MN
Hampton Inn & Suites Lino Lakes, MN	Hilton Garden Inn Shoreview, MN
Homewood Suites New Brighton, MN	Super 8 Hotel Blaine, MN
Attractions	
Bunker Beach Water Park Coon Rapids, MN	National Sports Center Blaine, MN
Outdoor	
Bunker Hills Campground Coon Rapids, MN	Bunker Hills Golf Club Coon Rapids, MN
Majestic Oaks Golf Club Ham Lake, MN	Rice Creek Lakes Campground Centerville, MN
Springbrook Nature Center Fridley, MN	
Retail	
Anoka Historic Downtown Anoka, MN	

Appendix D: Survey instrument



Gateway Area Visitor Survey 2012

1. What was the primary reason that you made this leisure trip to the area? (Check **✓** only 1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Attractions/family fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Festival/event	<input type="checkbox"/> Museums/historic sites
<input type="checkbox"/> Online deal (ie. Group on, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> Romantic getaway
<input type="checkbox"/> Shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> Sporting event	<input type="checkbox"/> Theaters/performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> Visit family/friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Explain: _____)	
2. How far in advance did you plan this trip ? (Check **✓** only 1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 2 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 4 weeks (1 month)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 8 weeks (1 to 2 months)
<input type="checkbox"/> 9 to 13 weeks (2 to 3 months)	<input type="checkbox"/> 13+ weeks	
3. What information sources did you use to plan this trip? (Check **✓** all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Area/destination website	<input type="checkbox"/> Area/destination visitor guide	<input type="checkbox"/> Area/destination e-newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/> Friends/family	<input type="checkbox"/> Magazine ad	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper
<input type="checkbox"/> Online travel reviews	<input type="checkbox"/> Online travel sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio
Which ones?	Which ones?	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel agent
<input type="checkbox"/> Expedia	<input type="checkbox"/> Expedia	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (what? _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/> Travelocity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Trip Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Trip Advisor	
<input type="checkbox"/> Twitter		
4. Which of the information sources you checked above was the most important? Please circle it in the question above.
5. Which of the following will you use to share or get information about your travel during this trip? (Check **✓** all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/> Foursquare	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet/websites	<input type="checkbox"/> Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/> iPad / tablet
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile apps	<input type="checkbox"/> Text message	<input type="checkbox"/> Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest	<input type="checkbox"/> QR codes
<input type="checkbox"/> Smartphone	<input type="checkbox"/> Yelp	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Explain: _____)		
6. Including this trip, how many times have you travelled to the area...

in the last 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> times last 12 months	
ever?	<input type="checkbox"/> times ever	OR <input type="checkbox"/> too many to remember
7. What was your primary mode of transportation you used for this trip?

<input type="checkbox"/> Airplane	<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Bus	<input type="checkbox"/> Boat	<input type="checkbox"/> Car, van, truck
<input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> RV/Camper	<input type="checkbox"/> Train	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
8. How many nights are you staying in the Minneapolis-St Paul area? ☐ # of nights (if 0, go to question 11)
9. Are you staying overnight....(Check **✓** only 1)

<i>In paid accommodations</i>	<i>In accommodation with no charge</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> A hotel/motel/historic inn	<input type="checkbox"/> At the home of family or friend
<input type="checkbox"/> A bed and breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/> At my vacation home/condo/cabin
<input type="checkbox"/> A vacation home/condo/cabin I rented	<input type="checkbox"/> At a campground with no fee
<input type="checkbox"/> In a campground	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (what? _____)
10. What was the primary reason you chose this lodging (Check **✓** only 1)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Free parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel amenities	<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel brand	<input type="checkbox"/> Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty/reward program	<input type="checkbox"/> Price	<input type="checkbox"/> Special offer/package	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable/green practices

Appendix D: Survey instrument, cont.

11. What best categorizes your group (Check ☐ 1)? ☐ Alone ☐ Couple/partner ☐ Family ☐ Friends ☐ Family & friends

12. Including yourself, how many people are in your immediate travel party? ☐ #people in travel party

13. How many of your travel party are...

☐ #Younger than 12 years ☐ #12 to 17 years old ☐ #18 to 35 years old
☐ #36 to 50 years old ☐ #51 to 69 years old ☐ #70+ years old

14. While on this trip, which of the following activities will members of your travel party participate in? (Check ☐ all that apply.)

<i>General</i>	<i>Participating in</i>	<i>Visiting</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Dining out	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking	<input type="checkbox"/> Amusement parks/carnivals
<input type="checkbox"/> Driving on designated byways	<input type="checkbox"/> Boating/sailing	<input type="checkbox"/> Art museums
<input type="checkbox"/> Guided tour	<input type="checkbox"/> Boat cruise	<input type="checkbox"/> Other museums
<input type="checkbox"/> Nightlife/evening entertain	<input type="checkbox"/> Casino gaming	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends/relatives
<input type="checkbox"/> Sightseeing	<input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/kayaking	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic sites
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Spa
	<input type="checkbox"/> Golfing	<input type="checkbox"/> Water parks
	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking	<input type="checkbox"/> Wineries/breweries
<i>Attending</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming/water sports	<input type="checkbox"/> Other attraction (What? _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Amateur/collegiate sport events	<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife viewing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Classical music concerts		<i>Shopping</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> College tour/college visit		<input type="checkbox"/> Arts, crafts, antiques
<input type="checkbox"/> Fairs or festivals		<input type="checkbox"/> General mall shopping
<input type="checkbox"/> Popular music concerts/shows		<input type="checkbox"/> Gifts/souvenirs
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/> Mall of America
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/> Outlet shopping

15. During this trip, have you made any changes to your original plans because of other travelers' opinions, reviews, photos, videos, or other information that you found in social media websites?

☐ I have not changed my plans based on social media
☐ I did make a few changes to my plans
☐ I made significant changes to my plans

Finally, a few questions about you.

16. In what year were you born? 19__

17. What is your total annual household income, before taxes?

☐ Less than \$50,000 ☐ \$50,000-\$100,000 ☐ \$100,000+

18. Are you... ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to answer

19. Are you currently a resident of:

☐ United States, Home zip code: _____
☐ Canada, Home postal code: _____
☐ Other country, Please specify: _____

For Administrative purposes only: WEEKDAY WEEKEND (Fri 12 pm-Sun)

Date: __/__/__ Time: __ am/pm Community: _____

Site type: 1 2 3 4 5 6 (1, Accommodations; 2, Attractions; 3, Events; 4, Retail; 5, Outdoor; 6, other)